



# Chambers's Journal

## SIXTH SERIES.

### TREGAVIS THE CHEMIST.

By JAMES PATEY.

IN TWO CHAPTERS.—CHAPTER I.

**I**T was a wet Saturday night. Since three o'clock in the afternoon there had been a continuous downpour, and the gutters of the cobble-paved streets of Langissack ran like rivulets.

The marketing was over, and the throng of miners and fisher-folk that made a weekly stir of shopping in our little town had dispersed to their homes. The shops were all closed but the chemist's, whose mighty bottles of amber and ruby and emerald still glowed in the dreariness, throwing a glamour upon the very puddles, and mitigating the misery of the night. Within the shop, the last customer stood at the counter—an old man, with a strip of sailcloth across his shoulders to protect him from the worst of the weather.

'That will be tenpence, altogether,' said the chemist, scrupulously sealing the package. 'It must be rubbed well in; the rubbing will do as much good as the embrocation.'

To which the old fellow replied, 'Ted'n for me; 'tes for Simeon. Bless thy sawl! I nivver use no druggist's trade. Whenever my leg troubleth me, I rin awver to Farrier Tregooze for a dab o' sheep's ointment, an' it doeth wonders.'

When the man had gone the chemist yawned and looked wearily at the clock. It seemed a waste of effulgence to keep open longer.

Tregavis the chemist was a tall, lank, loose-limbed man, with thin hair and whiskers of a lightish colour, and pale-blue eyes behind his spectacles; he had a slight stoop at the shoulders, and minuteness of measuring had given him a peering habit.

Going to the desk at the corner of the counter, he said to his assistant, 'I wish that coastguard would come for his mixture, Vanstone; we might then close.'

'He came in some time ago, sir,' replied Vanstone, looking at his master in some astonishment.

'I mean the man from Polveen who left the prescription and was to return for the medicine. It's time he came.'

The assistant turned scarlet. 'He was here three-quarters of an hour ago, sir. He said he was in a hurry to be off, as the wind was rising, and he was going home by boat. I let him have the mixture.'

'Then what is this?' cried the chemist, aghast, taking a paper-wrapped bottle from the desk.

'Cap'n Gerran's medicine, sir.'

'My God, Vanstone! what have you done? You have given the man the wrong bottle!'

Captain Gerran was suffering from an incurable malady, and at seasons was driven to a strong narcotic to alleviate his agony; and this was the draught that Richard Curtis, the Polveen coast-guard, was carrying home to his sick child! It was a fearful mistake—Life and Death lay bottled side by side on the chemist's desk; and Death, swift and terrible, was now in the pocket of the coastguard, who had braved the weather for the sake of his little maid, and was by this time sailing homeward.

Vanstone might have pleaded that the scrawled 'Capt. Gerran' in his master's handwriting was passably like 'Coast Guard'; but it was no moment for excuse or justification.

In the desperate hope that the man might not have left the town, Tregavis snatched the bottle and rushed hatless out of the shop and down the steep street towards the shore. The quay was deserted—there was no boat at the steps, and no sign of a boat's light upon the dark water. The rain fell in torrents, and there was a thickness over the sea.

A man with a lantern was removing tackle from one of the fishing-boats drawn up on the beach.

'Hulloa!' shouted Tregavis.

'Hulloa!' answered the fisherman.

'Can you tell me whether the Polveen coast-guard has gone home?'

'Iss; he left half-an-hour ago. I had a word with 'en. His little maid's bad, and he's cruel troubled about her; but he's got a bottle o' stuff that'll putt the cheeld right. I reckon he'll find it purty rough round the Point.'

With a thumping heart Tregavis retraced his steps, running uphill all the way to the 'Plume of Feathers.' The only hope to avert a tragedy was to overtake the coastguard, or to follow him close enough to prevent the administering of the draught. The distance from Langissack to Polveen by road is twenty miles, owing to the indentation of the coast; but across the estuary and around Penzele Head it is but five or six miles by sea. An out-of-the-way, inaccessible little village is Polveen, and there is no telegraph.

There was revelry at the 'Plume of Feathers,' and Johnny Roscorla was singing. Johnny was famous as a vocalist beyond the limits of the parish, and some of us thought that with a little training he might have 'travelled.' His voice was a strong tenor, clear and manly, with something of the ring of a trumpet in it; and he had the knack of lending a touch of sentiment or redeeming humour to the dreariest of ditties.

There was considerable emulation among the various little sects of Langissack for the possession of Roscorla, for such a voice as his would be an acquisition to any congregation. Zion yearned for Johnny, and Ebenezer was equally anxious for his in-gathering. But our *tenore robusto* had no sectarian predilections, and, with a fine impartiality, sang for everybody, his services being generally in demand at anniversaries; he even volunteered for the harmonium fund of the Primitives of the next parish, on which occasion he gave 'The Armour Bearer' so valiantly that the Primitives lost all prudence, and the collection was heroic.

Alas! Johnny's efforts were as much appreciated at the tavern as in the chapel, and the recognition of his talent took the too-frequent form of the gratuitous replenishing of his glass. The elders of Langissack began to shake their heads over Johnny. He was too often loafing about the town when other men were fishing; and it was prophesied that his singing would be the 'ruin of 'en.' But old Siah Hosken, our rubicund Silenus, said, 'Nay, let 'en sing while the music's in 'en, for the voice of 'en mellows the cider.' So Johnny pursued his melodious path to perdition.

Clear on the night from the crowded parlour of the 'Feathers' came the singing of Roscorla:

'They drank their king,  
An' they drank their queen,  
An' they drank their constitootion;'

and presently, in full blast, the chorus of the old sea-song:

'The wind that blows,  
The ship that goes,'

leaving Johnny to give the requisite tenderness to the culminating sentiment:

'And the lass that loves a sailor.'

Into the midst of the revellers sprang Tregavis the chemist, panting, bare-headed, dripping with wet—a somewhat ludicrous figure.

'I want a boatman for Polveen!' he cried in agitation.

The men stared in astonishment, and one said, 'You'm too late, sir. I reckon our work's done for wan week. 'Tis blowing a brave bit outside, an' nobody but a fool wed stir to say.'

'The Polveen coastguard has gone home with the wrong medicine,' gasped Tregavis, 'and I must overtake him!'

A simultaneous grin overspread the faces of the fishermen, and old Siah Hosken said, 'Don't 'ee trouble yourself, maister. If 'tis the wrong stuff I reckon 'twill do 'en all the same good—p'raps more; for 'twas a mistake that cured Granfer Pengelly. He swallered the liniment by the spoonful every four hours, an' anointed his back with the physic, an' in wan week he was a-larrupin' the constable.'

There was a burst of laughter, and the levity maddened the chemist.

'I must have a boat,' he cried fiercely. 'A mistake has been made—a terrible mistake—the man is taking home the wrong medicine to his child, and one dose will inevitably kill her. Isn't one of you man enough to go?'

A solemnity fell upon the men, and Johnny Roscorla said instantly, 'I'll go, sir!' and, reaching his cap, he strode out with Tregavis.

'Take the *Gilliflower*, Johnny,' cried Reuben Cardennick, following him; 'she's a safe boat, and purty swift.'

The others, desirous of lending a hand in getting the boat down, trooped out of the inn and clattered down the street. Old Bolitho the landlord, unaware of the trouble, coming into the parlour, was astonished to find an array of deserted mugs and glasses.

Cardennick looked anxiously over the water. 'Tis a dirty night, Johnny; an' 'twill be terrible rough round Penzele.'

Siah Hosken said, 'Tis a mazed job; better send Farrier Tregooze to Polveen a-horseback, an' trust to Providence.'

But Roscorla answered simply, 'The time's too precious. Bless my saw! we can't let the cheeld perish. If 'tis to be done, I'll do it.'

When Johnny Roscorla is arraigned for his manifold iniquities, let this night be remembered for him.

As the chemist hurried down the beach, Roscorla said, 'You bide here, Mr Tregavis; you'm no mortal use in the boat, an' I'll give the bottle to the man right enough.'

But Tregavis was not the man to depute a risky duty. 'You're a good fellow, Johnny,' said

he, 'but I must go.' He looked a pitiable object in the lantern-light—his partially-bald head bare to the rain, his black coat saturated, and a distracted look in his pale face.

The *Gilliflower* was carried down by as many eager fellows as could lay hands upon the gunwale.

'Look 'ee here, sir,' argued Johnny. 'S'pose any poor sawl's took bad in the night, who's to physic 'em? 'Twill be said that the chemist's out a-pleasure-sailin' round Penzele, wi' Johnny Roscorla. Dooty's dooty, sir; an' my place is in the boat, an' yours is 'long with the gallipots.'

The chemist leapt into the boat, and Johnny followed. As they pushed off one man flung a bucket aboard, and shouted, 'When you'm rounding the Point I reckon you'll have more ballast than is good for 'ee.'

In spite of the weather the night was not very dark—there was a moon somewhere in the dismal sky, according to the calendar. The rain fell in floods, but the group of fishermen stood on the quay and watched the bobbing light of the *Gilliflower* till it grew dim and disappeared.

For the first mile the wind was with them, and they were soon clear of the bay and feeling the wash of the Channel. Straight ahead blazed the light on the promontory of Penzele. Tregavis was consumed with impatience, and the minutes seemed hours. With morbid persistency his imagination pictured with every grim detail the tragic sequel of the night's blunder. Once he took the oars, and attempted to row in the broken water—an attempt that would have been ludicrous enough under other circumstances. If Roscorla had taken a longer tack he might have kept the boat drier, but soon the water was breaking over the bow. The chemist seized the bucket and baled desperately—it suited his mood better than the agony of inaction. The rain slackened, and the weather grew thicker; instead of the pelting downpour there was a driving drizzle. At times the light on Penzele waned to a glimmer and disappeared for several minutes.

'Tis an ugly night,' cried Johnny; 'thickish in streaks.' And he grew anxious as he stared into the vagueness.

Then Tregavis prayed—prayed with a vehemence that was terrifying to Johnny Roscorla. The man called aloud to the Almighty in an anguish of entreaty. 'I tell 'ee 'twas whisht, an' I was mortal skeered,' said Johnny when he afterwards told the story of the night's adventure; 'for the supplication of 'en was terrible to hearken to.'

An impenetrable mist surrounded them, and they could no longer make out the light on Penzele. The boat was at the mercy of wind and current, and the fisherman lost all idea of his course in the darkness.

'The Lord help us!' cried Johnny fervently, 'for I'm no better to 'ee than a blind man.' He made to lower the sail. 'Twill clear again soon,' said he, 'an' 'tis no good to rin scat into Penzele.'

But Tregavis shouted, 'Are you afraid, man? Let her run.'

'Right, sir!' answered Johnny as cheerily as he could; 'I'll steer by faith, as the hymn saith—'tis fitty doctrine, but poor saymanship.'

So they drove blindly on into the thickness. Presently on their ears comes a dull, throbbing sound—the slow pulse of a steamer feeling her way at quarter-speed. The two men could see no lights, and could only vaguely tell the direction of the approaching vessel.

'She'll niver see us!' cried Roscorla; and with straining eyes he peered into the darkness, knowing that life or death might hang on a turn of the tiller.

Nearer and nearer came the rhythmic throb, till they could almost feel the imminence of the panting monster. Both men shouted at the top of their voices, and out of the obscurity loomed a black wall that bore down upon them with the hideous blare of a siren.

There was no cleaving, smashing impact; but the fishing-boat was struck violently enough at the bow, and its occupants found themselves in the water; and the next moment the half-filled boat was caught in a huff of wind and capsized. So the *Gilliflower*, with its set sail submerged, drifted bottom-up upon the rocks at Penzele, where it suffered the buffeting of three tides, and was eventually flung ashore on Polveen beach, stave by stave.

## THE DECLINE OF OATMEAL PORRIDGE.



HERE seems to be a general consensus of opinion among those who are in a position to know the facts of the matter that the 'hale-some parritch' is going out of use.

It is very sincerely to be regretted.

Science and popular experience agree in pronouncing it one of the most nutritious of foods, and one of the cheapest too. The fact that it is very cheap is indeed probably the chief reason for the decline in its consumption. Because it is

cheap it has been accounted the poor man's food, as it really has been very extensively in the past. Everybody knows that all over Scotland especially it used to be the chief article of diet with the working-classes. But people will not eat 'poor men's food' if they can help it; and of late years the working-classes have been prospering. Work has been abundant and wages good, and unfortunately large numbers of them have spent their entire earnings on the more highly-appreciated though often far less nutritious and

more expensive knick-knacks of the middle-class meal-table.

When Carlyle saw Lord Macaulay he said, 'Ay, any one can see that thy face is made out of Scotch oatmeal.' It seems quite likely that one hundred years ago, when the range of articles of diet was more limited, oatmeal was overdone in Scotland, as it now seems underdone. Dr William Alexander, in his *Rural Life in the North*, quotes an old interrogatory, which shows that this diet was partaken of in one form or another by some poor folks three times a day. 'Have you got your *pottage*?' (breakfast); 'Have you got your *sowens*?' (dinner); 'Have you got your *brose*?' (supper). These were all different preparations of oatmeal. Hugh Miller, in his *Schools and School-masters*, relates his experiences, more than seventy years ago, when it became his turn to cook for a squad of masons, to make oatcakes and boil porridge. He spoilt a meal or two, he says, 'ere my porridge became palatable, or my cakes crisp, or my brose free and knotty, or my brochan sufficiently smooth and void of knots.' In his method of making porridge at the barrack the cook continued stirring the mess and adding meal until from its first wild ebullitions it became silent over the fire. Miller managed to make porridge like leaven, quite after this manner. Once he made a dough-like mass partly the colour of chocolate. The rest was burnt brown at the bottom of the pot. His master, when ladling out the stuff, said: 'Od, laddie, what ca' ye this? Ca' ye this *brochan*?' 'Onything ye like,' he replied; 'but there are two kinds in the pot, and it will go hard if none of them please you.' No wonder the master was angry as he discussed what seemed a hard brown dumpling.

Dr J. McGrigor Robertson, author of *The Household Physician*, in one of the Edinburgh 'Health Lectures' on *Food and Drink*, gives a table showing how much a penny can buy; from which it appears that we can get for that sum twenty times the amount of nutritive material in the shape of oatmeal that we can in the shape of lean beef. He states the matter in another way, by giving two breakfasts, in the first of which oatmeal appears, costing half the money of the other, yet with 'pre-eminence in nutritive quality which ham and egg cannot hope to rival,' as given in the second: (I.) Six ounces oatmeal made into porridge, ten ounces sweet milk, one pint cocoa, quarter-lb. bread, half-ounce butter—yields 120 grains nitrogen, 2145 grains carbon. Cost, 3d. (II.) One pint coffee, one egg, quarter-lb. bacon, half-lb. bread, one ounce butter—yields 80 grains nitrogen, 1792 grains carbon. Cost, 5½d.

Dr Frankland has also said that the same amount of work may be obtained from oatmeal costing 3½d. as from butcher-meat costing 3s. 6½d. Mr T. Brassey, the great railway contractor, who had uncommon opportunities for observing the working power of men of different nationalities,

has left it on record that 'the best navvies are teetotalers. That, where three hundred of them had to widen a gauge, and had to effect the change quickly, working day and night, it was found that oatmeal gruel was the best for keeping up their energies.'

'Twenty years ago, or within a much smaller period in some parts,' writes Mr William Inglis, of Bonnington, Leith, 'oatmeal was the staple article of diet amongst a large percentage of the working population of Scotland, just as rice is in India or China and the East generally. Amongst the rural population, labourers, and the majority living in country villages, oatmeal was always used once a day, often twice—morning and evening. Farm hands were generally, till within some ten or twelve years ago, paid not altogether in money, but had so much in cash and the balance in oatmeal and potatoes.'

That is what in England was known as the 'truck system,' and has been made illegal. It is a bad system wherever it prevails, and in itself would be almost enough to bring about a revolt against the food as soon as the people found it possible. It is satisfactory that it has to a very great extent disappeared in Scotland. Where oatmeal is still given as wages it is frequently exchanged for tea and other provisions, and farmers are everywhere complaining of late that their workers have tea carried out to the fields instead of porridge, as they used to have.

Nor is this food so much used in town as formerly. The poorest class of workers have for the most part given it up, though it is still frequently used by the more intelligent of skilled artisans, who do not take it because it is cheap, but because they like it, and because they believe in its wholesome and nourishing qualities. The falling off in the consumption, it seems pretty evident, is mainly among the poorest and least intelligent section of the community; while there are good reasons for believing that the consumption is decidedly on the increase among those who are better off. The very poor man who eats porridge because it is cheap envies the better-paid workman who can indulge in bacon and eggs, rump-steaks, or fish and fowl; and, as soon as earnings permit of it, he gives up his porridge and pushes on towards what he considers these higher dietary levels, even though he can get only as far as a modest sausage or some indigestible tinned abomination. But among people who are able to eat what they please, and whose choice is determined only by what they consider most wholesome—the better-paid class of artisans and middle and upper class households generally—the consumption of oatmeal is on the increase. The greater intelligence on all matters of health has during the past few years led towards greater simplicity of diet; and many people both in Scotland and in England are now taking from intelligent and deliberate choice the food which



formerly among a large section of the population was eaten from prevailing custom or because it was cheap. Porridge is to be found now as a regular item in the bills of fare at all good English hotels, though in many of them the cooks have not yet learned how to prepare it properly.

Some of the Scotch dealers in the article have another way of accounting for the falling off in consumption. They say that oatmeal is not nowadays what it used to be. The real thing is still to be got by a little care and by paying a proper price; but the keen competition for business and the continual cutting down of prices has led to the 'adulteration' of the genuine article. Between real Scotch oatmeal and the imported American or Canadian article, say the Scotch millers, there is as much difference as between diamond and glass. British traders buy this cheap American stuff and 'adulterate' the Scotch with it; and the consequence is that people who used to get really good porridge would rather give it up altogether than eat what they get now. This explanation is given for what it is worth; and though perhaps Americans and Canadians might not altogether fall in with it, if it is a fact that from increasing competition large quantities of inferior oatmeal are now brought into the market, it would no doubt partly account for the falling off of consumption among the poor, who would of course be the purchasers of the cheapest qualities, and it would not be inconsistent with the increase among those who can buy the best article.

It is a thousand pities that from any cause whatever there should be any tendency to give up this cheap and excellent food in favour of articles that cost twice as much, and are frequently not half as good. Dr Johnson's well-known dictionary definition of 'oats'—'A grain which in England is generally given to horses, but in Scotland supports the people'—was merely a little splutter of the Doctor's pettiness and prejudice. 'Why,' he said to Boswell, 'I own that by my definition of oats I meant to vex them.' Lord Elibank's rejoinder, when it was repeated to him, however, was crushing: 'And whaur'll you find sic horses and sic men?' English horses and Scotchmen have in the past undoubtedly afforded unquestionable evidence of the value of oats for the building up of frames and the development of muscle, and science has unmistakably shown that that is just what might have been expected from the food.

Professor Norton, of Yale University, some years ago made a thorough analytical examination of the oat-plant in all its stages of growth. He was a very competent chemist, and the results he arrived at have in the main been pretty much what other authorities have come to since. After an interesting account of the manner in which silica is appropriated by the plant in the structure of stalk and leaf and husk, the professor continued: 'Equally

beautiful are the facts which we discover respecting the alkaline sulphates and phosphates. We find little of the latter in the whole length of the straw, in the leaf, or in the chaff. But when we arrive at the grain, the alkaline sulphates disappear, and the phosphates take their places; these have passed up the whole length of the stalk, avoiding the leaves and the chaff, and at last, by a law infinitely more unerring than any which human wisdom could devise, deposited themselves in the very place where phosphoric acid is most needed, in order that, as part of the food, it may build up the bones, the framework of the animal body. . . . We see, then,' concludes the professor, 'that even including the husk, the oat is superior to almost any other corn in those ingredients which go to the production of muscle in the body. The strong, muscular forms of Scottish ploughmen have long been living witnesses to the good properties of their favourite and almost only food.' Professor Norton found that, taking a low average, the oat yields about four per cent. more of the ingredients necessary for bone and muscle making than the best wheat. Fine horses in England and fine men in Scotland are thus just about what you might expect, on scientific grounds, to find.

It is certainly unfortunate that a food that has proved its capability of building up so stalwart a race of men as the agriculturists of Scotland should be losing its popularity. Perhaps, when it comes to be known how extensively it is being adopted by the comparatively wealthy there will be a reaction in its favour. Whatever may be said about imported meal, there can be no doubt Scotch oatmeal or rolled oats cannot be beaten; and, if properly cooked, is as delicious as it is wholesome. Scotch porridge is made as follows: To one pint of water when boiling add three tablespoonfuls of oatmeal, shaken slowly through the fingers or a sieve, and stirred continuously; add a little salt, and boil thirty minutes. Connoisseurs in the matter hold that the cooking ought to be done in a double saucepan, so that the inner vessel containing the oatmeal should come in contact, not with the dry scorching heat of the fire, but with boiling water.

The writer of this, though not a Scotchman, has for many years taken porridge for breakfast, though he has been accustomed to do what probably no Scotchman would do—that is to say, he has always taken stewed fruit with it. The Scot usually takes his 'parritch' with milk—rarely with cream, as a luxury; and, when milk is not available, with treacle, treacle-beer, or the like; but, with these, porridge is apt to get a trifle monotonous. A plate of well-cooked porridge with rhubarb, gooseberries, cherries, plums, damsons, apples, or pears, with milk and sugar, afford a seasonable variety; always cheap, always delicious, and always wholesome.

## A NEW NOAH.\*

By FRED WHISHAW.



‘**I** WAS already married when the following events happened,’ said Holdsworth, who narrated this tale at our camp-fire; ‘and we were living on a little estate in Florida, growing oranges. The estate and all my orange-trees are for sale, cheap, if any of you want to buy the lot; perhaps you’ll make ’em pay—I couldn’t! But that’s not in the story.’

‘Well, my house was a kind of shanty, built on the banks of a small river, the Rippler, an innocent-looking, smug kind of a stream that you’d never imagine capable of any sort of mischief; for it was but thirty yards wide, or so, and sluiced along with a harmless kind of a medium current, just as if it were far too busy trying to get safely down to the sea to have time for any fooling around. It had the appearance of sticking strictly to business, and would be the last river, one would think, to waste time in spreading its waters over the surrounding country in floods, and such-like foolery, when it ought to be hurrying away towards the Mexican Gulf. Yet this was just another instance of the truth of that wise saying that “One never knows.”’

‘One never does know anything worth knowing—at least, not much. If one could only be certain, now, when there would be a flood, or a tornado, or a drought, or a deluge, or a war, or any other first-class upsetter of the usual, if I may coin a term, what a lot of money one might make by buying for a rise beforehand!’

‘Well, we had a very rainy season one year early in the fall, and our innocent-looking little Rippler began to flow faster, and gradually to widen; and this continuing for a few days caused my wife and me to look somewhat grave, though we didn’t as yet anticipate anything like what eventually occurred.’

‘Our nearest neighbours were a young fellow and his wife, Europeans like ourselves, who had no more intimate acquaintance with our river and its ways than we. My wife, Bridget, had been very kind to these good folks at the time of their little one’s birth, about a month ago, and they—the Sinclairs—had become pretty intimate with us since, and considerably devoted to Bridget by reason of her kindness at a critical period.’

‘Well, one day the water began to rise very rapidly—so much more rapidly than it had done hitherto that I began to be seriously alarmed for our house and furniture; for the lip of the

stream now lay but a foot or two clear of the front door, and the water still rising.

“Bridget,” I said, “I don’t quite like it. I think we’ll move the furniture and things upstairs.”

‘Our shanty was quite a mansion in comparison with most of the dwellings—one-storied buildings for the greater part—in the neighbourhood, for we possessed two stories, the fact being that my partner Harris and I lived under the same roof, he inhabiting the upper and Bridget and I the lower story. Unfortunately, however, Harris was up north, at New York, on business, and when I began, with Bridget’s assistance, to work at the removal of our household gods, I found that without the help of another man we could not do much.’

‘I decided to run over to Sinclair’s, therefore, and beg him to come down first thing in the morning and lend me a hand. Sinclair’s home stood considerably higher up the river than ours, and I anticipated no danger for him, for his house was built on rising ground some fifty yards back from the stream.’

‘My good neighbour heartily acquiesced in my request for his assistance, and promised to come over at daylight.’

‘Sinclair proved as good as his word, and early enough next morning he appeared, having come on foot, leaving the horse at home. Sinclair was richer than I by this horse, which he used for farm-work: I could not afford such a luxury at that time. He had left the horse for his wife, in case, as he laughingly observed, the floods should come up so quickly during his absence that it might be necessary for her to escape with the baby up-country.’

‘The water, when Sinclair arrived, was standing several inches deep in our rooms, and it was raining cats and dogs. We had all our nice furniture there, mind you—a piano, and several other heavy things; for, though we were poor enough, our respective fathers and friends had set us up handsomely at our wedding, and everything was good and new. Besides all this, there was the season’s produce in apples and potatoes, and so on, in the barn; no oranges as yet from our young trees—and all this had to be removed into safety. Poor old Harris would have had a fit if he had seen his cosy sitting-room crammed with our furniture and a few score sacks of potatoes and things, all piled cheek by jowl with and upon one another and mixed with his things.’

‘With Sinclair’s help the work of carrying and removing went on quickly enough, and we had just about finished, at eleven in the morning, when an

\* It may interest the reader to know that in its main incident this story is the narrative of an actual occurrence.—F. W.

astonishing thing happened. There was a clattering and a splashing along the road that led by the river behind our house and past Sinclair's towards Manorville (a little township ten miles away), and to our great surprise up rode Mrs Sinclair, pale and very agitated, and obviously frightened.

"Oh Jack," she cried, sitting still upon her panting horse, which was wet up to his body through galloping in the water, for it now reached in the road as high as his knees—"Jack, I've come to warn you you must return home at once; there's a man been in from Manorville who says the lake up at Johnstontown is likely to overflow, and if it does our river will go up six feet or more, and probably whirl everything away, as it did in 'fifty-eight,' he says. There'll be a boat down from Manorville at one o'clock to take us off, and you, too, Mrs Holdsworth—and—and I'm afraid we shall both lose our houses and most of our property as well."

"This was very wretched news. Poor Mrs Sinclair was almost in hysterics as she finished her tale; but she would not consent to dismount and enter the house in order to be refreshed and comforted; there was no time, she sobbed, and she must get back to baby."

"Good heavens, Mary! what have you done with the child?" asked Sinclair, suddenly recalling the fact that his wife had not brought baby with her. "You've never left it alone?"

"Oh, baby is quite safe," Mrs Sinclair replied, smiling through her tears. "The water is not nearly up to the floor-level yet, and baby's bassinette is on the table in the sitting-room; even the six-foot rise of the water would not reach her."

"Well, what's to be done?" I asked, my heart feeling pretty heavy, for I felt that our house was doomed supposing the Johnston Lake should burst, as Mrs Sinclair said.

"I'm afraid you'll have to leave your shanty to take care of itself, old man," said Sinclair, "and come up our way; our house, standing, as it does, so much higher, will be safer than this."

"Maybe ours will stand," I mused; "it's pretty firmly built into its foundations."

"Well, it will stand or fall whether you are by or not," said Sinclair. "Come back with us, man; we must hope for the best and do the wisest!"

"Bridget can ride with me," added Mrs Sinclair, "and Jack and you won't mind wading. Bring any papers or valuables in case of accidents."

"This was obviously the only sensible course open to us. I went upstairs and collected my papers, money, and valuables, and I was still searching about for my wife's little stock of jewellery when I heard a shout from Sinclair, who stood and talked with the ladies outside, the group being just as I had left them."

"Quick, Mary—dismount! Jump into my arms!" I heard Jack Sinclair shout.

"I rushed downstairs—I think I took the whole flight at a bound—and was just in time to see a remarkable sight."

"Mrs Sinclair, in the foreground, was in the act of scrambling from her horse's back—assisted by my wife—into the arms of her husband. In the background, coming tearing round the corner of land which made a bend of the river a hundred yards above our house, there rushed towards us a seething, roaring wave, several feet in height, carrying trees and refuse, and bringing along with it, as it seemed, a storm of wind and rain."

"Back—into the house and upstairs!" cried Sinclair, hustling the ladies in at the door. "Don't waste a second. Come, Holdsworth. God grant your shanty is as strong as you think!"

"We were all in the top room and at the window in less than half a minute, and just in time to see a grand and terrible spectacle. With a hissing, roaring sound the scudding wave reached the house. The water flooded and leaped up the sides, washing, at its first striking, a foot or two higher than its real depth, and actually splashing in at the upper windows. Trees and broken timber and piles of straw went swirling and whizzing past us, breaking the glass of the windows and catching in the frames. Sinclair's horse was washed away in an instant and disappeared; everything seemed to be turning round. I grew giddy and dazed. Were we afloat and travelling with the flood, or had the house stood the shock?"

"It had withstood it, fortunately; Harris and I had cause for self-congratulation on that score, for we built the thing ourselves. I was not long in discovering the fact that we were stationary, and in my joy and relief I shouted suddenly, "Hooray! we are safe; the old place has stood it. So must yours have done, Sinclair," I added, "for it hasn't floated past us. What's the matter with your wife?" I concluded. "Look at her!"

"My good Bridget was busy attending to her already, having discerned her need while Sinclair and I were still at the window."

"She has fainted," said Bridget. "She was thinking of the baby."

"Good heavens, yes—the baby!" I muttered; "but it will be all right, Sinclair, for the house has held together, and will hold, and the child is high out of danger."

"God grant it," he said hoarsely. "I don't know; the water has come up eight feet if it has come up an inch!" Sinclair suddenly went down on his knees. "God—in mercy save our child," he groaned.

"We comforted him as best we could, and Mary too, when she came round; but it was clear that they had little hope, and that they were both, for the time being, nearly heartbroken. To tell the truth, in my secret heart I had

not much hope for the child either. Undoubtedly the water would be standing deep in their sitting-room; the poor creature, in all human probability, was drowned already! In any case she must starve, for how could she possibly be saved until the flood went down? It was utterly impossible to dream of getting back to the poor, doomed little mortal.

'For two hours we sat and stood and shivered at the windows, watching the water that rushed by but a couple of feet below us. We spoke little. The Sinclairs sat close to one another, and, I think, were mostly engaged in praying. Bridget fetched food and a bottle of wine, but they would neither eat nor drink.

'Suddenly Jack said, "The water's a little lower!"

'I looked out. He was right; it had receded by nearly a foot from the high-water mark.

"It will go down, I dare say," said I bracingly, "nearly as quickly as it rose."

'Sinclair shook his head, glancing at his wife, who sat quietly weeping. I knew what he meant; he would have said, if he had spoken, "Too late."

'Half-an-hour more of waiting and watching, and then another excitement came. Floating rapidly on the bosom of the flood came a large boat, half-full of people.

"Here come the rescuers!" I said. "Courage, Mrs Sinclair; now we shall hear news of the—of your house."

'The boat came rapidly bearing down upon us. Those on board shouted cheerily as they approached, bidding us catch the ropes they intended to throw, and to climb out of the window as quickly as we could, once they were alongside. In another minute we were all aboard. I spoke to the man who seemed to be in command.

"Did you stop at Sinclair's place?" I asked him.

"No; we shouted, and found they had left already. I guessed they had come down your way," he replied.

"Was the water up to their windows?" I continued under my breath, for I could see the Sinclairs watching and listening. The man replied aloud, ignorant that he stabbed two fellow-creatures to the very heart:

"Up to them," he laughed. "Well, just about; there's six or seven feet of water in their parlour if there's an inch! They'd have had to sit on the roof till we came along."

'It was all over with hope then. Poor Mary Sinclair hid her face and sobbed aloud; her husband was not much better.

"What is it?" asked the skipper.

"The baby," I muttered, "left alone in the room."

"Good heavens!" ejaculated the horrified fellow, "then I'm afraid— But, Lord knows. Cheer up, missus; Mr Holdsworth's is the last party we've to take up; we'll turn her round now

at once, and head up-stream. The flood's giving fast; in a couple of hours we may reach your house if we work hard—it is but a mile and a half. Pull her round, bow side; we'll take her into the shallows and work up-stream for all we're worth."

'Poor Mrs Sinclair glanced gratefully at the speaker, but shook her head. During the hard struggle up-stream towards their house she sat holding my wife's hand, and for all I could hear I don't think either of them spoke a word, though I don't doubt there was some hand-pressing done. Trust women to find a lot of consolation in holding one another by the hand; it "completes the circle" of sympathy, I suppose, and lets the electric current pass freely between them.

'The four fellows at the oars, with help from Sinclair and myself—it seemed to do Jack good to have something to do—sent the big boat travelling steadily though slowly along against the still powerful current; and in little more than an hour we were nearly abreast of Sinclair's shanty.

'I saw from some distance away that it was all up; high-water mark was visible enough, and it was nearly up at the top of the windows. Sinclair saw it too, and his hand stole to his wife's.

"Courage, old woman," I heard him say; "we've got to face the worst. See where the water reached."

'Poor Mary Sinclair looked up at the house with a white, set face, but said nothing. The water was much lower now, but the boat could still float right up to the building. Mrs Sinclair prepared to get out and climb in at the window.

"Don't let her go in, Sinclair," I whispered, nudging him; "let her wait till she's calmer. Go in first yourself, and prepare things a bit for her; or, better still, let Bridget and me go in first; you can enter at the kitchen window and wait there a while"—

"No; she will insist upon going, poor soul," sighed Jack, with a kind of sob in his throat. "God help her!"

'But as we drew up close to the house, and Mary stood up to step out on the window-sill, an extraordinary thing happened. With perfect distinctness the sound of a baby's cry from within the house broke the sympathetic silence that prevailed without. It was the weirdest, ghostliest thing, under existing circumstances.

"Gracious Heaven! what's that?" exclaimed Sinclair, starting. "The child can't possibly be"—

"She can—she can—she *is*!" cried Mrs Sinclair. "Oh, don't I know her cry in a thousand? She's alive, our darling! Oh Jack! a miracle has happened."

'It was partly true; the child was alive, but there had been no miraculous intervention in its favour. The explanation was simple indeed; and



when old Jack Sinclair came to the window, and made over the facts to us who remained in the boat, the cheer that went up might have been heard in California.

"The bassinette was on the table, boys," said the happy, radiant father; "and when the water rose in the room the table simply floated, and the cradle lay on the top with the little beggar

fast asleep inside—and there you are! We'd call the kid Noah after this if Noah wasn't a man's name; but she's a girl, you see!"

"Call her 'Noa' without the 'h'!" roared some delighted fellow from the boat," concluded Holdsworth; "and hang me if they didn't do it! The child was christened "Noa" a fortnight afterwards, and Noa she is to this day!"

## BANKING ANECDOTES AND INCIDENTS.



S is well known, many notes of the Bank of England have had singular histories attached to them, some of which have already been told in these pages. Two notes of one hundred pounds each, dated in 1696 (the bank only opened for business on 1st January 1695), were presented at the Bank for payment in 1764—that is, sixty-eight years later. These notes were discovered in an old Family Bible, where it was supposed they had been placed for safe keeping, and had lain ever since. As they are among the curios shown at the Bank, a quaint description of them may be given from the *Scots Magazine* of the period: 'They are as large as an Indian bond, and the figure of Britannia is on the top of them; they contain about six times the writing that our present notes do; there is a reference to and quotation from the charter of the company, and bear to be paid by ten pounds at a time, and to have a penny a day interest for one year.'

In 1791, Mr Pitt, the then premier of England, was busy making efforts to reduce the National Debt, which had been increased by no less a sum than one hundred and twenty-one and a quarter millions during the great American war, and at its close amounted to nearly two hundred and fifty millions. A bright idea occurred to Mr Pitt: Why not annex the Bank of England dividends for which no owners had appeared? This could not be done, however, without an act of parliament, and it was only proper to apprise the Bank of the Government's intention in this matter. Accordingly, at a meeting of the Bank's proprietors, held in the spring of 1791, the Governor was in a position to acquaint the court that a bill would be laid before parliament to appropriate the sum of five hundred thousand pounds out of the unclaimed dividends in the hands of the Bank for the use of the Government. While the bill was before parliament various attempts were made by petition to the House of Commons and personal application to Mr Pitt on the part of the Bank to get the measure withdrawn. The ministry stuck to the bill, which was read a third time; but at this stage a compromise was arrived at, under which the Bank lent the Government five hundred thousand pounds without interest, and

for so long a period as the sum of six hundred thousand pounds in unclaimed dividends should remain in the hands of the Bank.

An effort was made to get from the Bank of England a list of these dividends, which they seemed unwilling to furnish, and even forbade their employés to give any information on the subject, under peril of being discharged from their situations if they did so. At last a list of the dividends was published through the ministry putting pressure on the Bank, and for the first time moneys were brought to light which, in Mr Pitt's words, 'belonged to the public, on whose behalf and as whose agents the Bank of England paid them, and not to the proprietors of that corporation.' Until 1845 the Unclaimed Dividend Books of the Bank were regularly published; but the practice was discontinued, because fraudulent attempts to draw the dividends were so frequent. In that year the Bank received authority to investigate the circumstances connected with these unclaimed sums, so as to find out the owners. Applications for dividends must now be made direct to the Bank.

Forgeries of Bank of England notes have been attempted from time to time, and the first execution for that crime took place on 1st May 1758. This penalty has now been abolished for many years. In the spring of 1819 a curious case was brought before the Court of King's Bench. The plaintiff in the action was a man who had paid away a one-pound note of the Bank of England, which was pronounced to be a forgery. The defendant was an inspector of the Bank, and the story was to this effect: When the plaintiff learned that the note in question was a forgery, he got hold of it by stratagem, and paid the amount of it. The note was demanded back from him, but he refused to part with it. In these days it was the practice of the Bank to retain all forged notes that were presented for payment; now the Bank authorities simply stamp the word 'Forged' on such notes. For declining to deliver up the forged note, the plaintiff in this action was taken before a magistrate on the charge 'of having a note in his possession knowing it to be forged and counterfeit.' As a result of the inspector's evidence against him, he was committed to prison by a magistrate, and after three days' confine-

ment was released on bail to appear when called upon. Not having been cited for a period of twelve months, he raised an action for false imprisonment against the inspector at whose instance this had been done. During the process it was proved that the note about which all the hubbub had arisen was a genuine Bank of England one-pound note, and so the jury had no hesitation in awarding the plaintiff damages to the extent of one hundred pounds, by way of reparation of his character.

Robberies of bank-messengers, of bank clients, and even of bankers themselves occur at intervals in so large a city as London. The thefts from bank employes have taken place sometimes in the open street, and at other times at the bank counter. When the money has been handed to them and they are in the act of taking it, some one diverts their attention by a question; and while this is being answered a confederate of the dishonest querist picks up the money with all the celerity of an accomplished thief, and disappears as swiftly. When the money is sought for it cannot be found. Take again an instance of the street theft or robbery: A lady has just performed her banking business, and has hardly taken a seat in her brougham when a white-haired gentleman approaches her and expresses his great regret that a mistake has been made by the bank cashier in paying her cheque. Would she kindly let him have the money back so that the matter might be rectified? Most willingly, as he seems so insistent to spare her any trouble. The carriage waits accordingly, with its fair inmate, until the return of this courteous bank officer. Some minutes pass, however, without any sign of him, and the lady is reluctantly compelled to re-enter the bank, so as to find out the cause of the delay in his return. What is her surprise to find not the least trace of the *soi-disant* bank-messenger, and to be informed that there was no inaccuracy with the payment made to her, nor was any one deputed to make any statement to her on the subject! What became of the man may easily be surmised. He would soon strip himself of his false wig and get merged in the broad stream of London life, the component parts of which concern themselves with so little outside their own selves.

As is well known, banks act as custodians of boxes deposited with them for safe keeping. They make no charge for doing so, their object being to undertake no responsibility and incur no risk, as the acceptance of payment would imply. Naturally it happens that boxes stowed away by the banks in this manner come to be lost sight of by their owners. Those who left them for safe keeping die without passing on the secret of their existence to their heirs. Who is to know that such possessions could be claimed? It has been suggested that these boxes should be occasionally overhauled and their contents made public. An advertisement was issued in 1881, by order of

the Court of Chancery, Ireland, with a view to discover the owners of the following, amongst other valuables, deposited in a Dublin bank: '(1) Box containing a number of silver articles, coins, medals, and seals, and having on it a crest and the name "E. S. Cooper;" (2) Box containing a number of silver articles, of which several are crested with a coat of arms, supposed to be those of Viscount Netterville; (3) Box containing thirty-nine articles of plate, some of them bearing a coronet; (4) Box containing diamonds and articles of jewellery, lodged by Dr Andrew Blake and George Jennings on December 22, 1796.' The bank in question is believed to have been the old private banking firm of La Touche & Co., which amalgamated with the Munster Bank. There were some curious inquiries and tales about the chests found in their vaults, which were eventually handed over to the Court of Chancery. In the vaults of the Bank of Ireland are some chests of plate which were deposited with the bank before it moved into its present building—that is, before the year 1800—the owners of which are unknown. Some years ago, the confidential staff of the Bank of England discovered in the vaults a chest which, on being moved, literally fell to pieces from age. It contained a magnificent and very valuable toilet service of solid silver. No clue to the owner's identity could be found either on the box or on any of the pieces of plate, which were simply engraved with a cipher and a coronet. However, amongst the numerous other things found in the box was a gold casket of the period of Charles II., and a packet of old love-letters written during the time of the Restoration. These afforded some clue to the original depositor; and the directors having caused search to be made in the Bank's books, the representative of the old owner was discovered, and the plate and love-letters handed over accordingly. The sale of the plate brought in a sum which was most welcome to the poverty-stricken descendants of a once great family. So far as known there are no unclaimed boxes in the keeping of the Scotch banks.

Unclaimed deposits occasionally crop up when from time to time calls are made on banks to pay them. Instances of this become public in sufficient number to indicate that there is something in the demand for publicity of these dormant balances. A few years ago a Glasgow gentleman died, and among his possessions was an old desk. This fell to one of his heirs; and not so long since a lady connected with the family was struck with the similarity of this article of furniture to one she had herself, and she expressed curiosity as to whether it had, like her desk, a secret drawer. Examination was made, and sure enough a drawer was found, and in it two deposit-receipts for sums aggregating something over three hundred pounds. These deposits were dated away back between thirty and forty years, and one of them was on the City of Glasgow Bank.

They were, of course, duly presented, the latter to the Assets Company which took over the unliquidated portion of the City of Glasgow Bank's affairs, and both were paid, with interest. The reflection occurs that if the Assets Company were to publish a list of the holders of the unclaimed balances in their books it would lead to much of the money being claimed. In an old box with books belonging to a provincial library there was found a bank-book which must have lain there for about thirty years. The amount deposited was only three pounds fourteen shillings and ninepence; but so long had the money remained that the interest on that sum amounted to eight pounds eleven shillings and fivepence, making a total of twelve pounds fifteen shillings and ninepence—not a despicable sum in these degenerate days.

Reverting to bank robberies, an amusing tale is told by a writer on banking as to the perpetration of an act of fraud on a Lombard Street banking-house. The narrative begins with an advertisement which appeared in May 1824 in the *Morning Advertiser* asking for the services of a junior clerk at a certain part of Holborn. This announcement seems to have arrested the attention of a young Irish boy named Mike, when he had conveyed his father's meal to the public-house where he usually consumed it. The parent of the lad was a bricklayers' labourer; and, after he had finished his repast, his son set off to apply for the vacant situation. Just when Mike had got to the stair leading to the place he wanted, he was accosted by a gentlemanly-looking man, who asked his errand. On Mike telling his object, the other replied that he was the party in want of a clerk; and being sufficiently satisfied with Mike's simplicity of character, he said to him, 'I shall want you first to go into the City for me and obtain the money for a bill,' which he took out of a black case, and which he said would be paid in Lombard Street. Particular instructions were then given to Mike in the following terms: 'When you have got the money safe in your pocket, and before you leave the banking-house, stand on the step of the door and take your hat off.' While Mike thought his fortune was now made, as he wended his way to Lombard Street, his employer jumped into a cab, and, after leaving it, concealed himself in a court exactly opposite the banking-house. Here he waited for Mike, and in less than ten minutes saw the latter stand on the step of the door and take off his hat in token that he had got the money all right. Off went the employer in his cab to wait for Mike's return, happy that no one seemed to be following. The sum of four hundred and fifty-eight pounds was safely handed over by Mike to his master, who in return for the service made the youth a present of three sovereigns, telling him to buy himself a new jacket and a pair of trousers. The boy then went to relate his fortune to his mother, while his employer hurried to get gold for his notes.

On the Monday following—the date when Mike was engaged to resume his duties—he and his mother together sought the habitation of Mike's employer in Holborn. No such person as Mr Dixon could be found, nor was he even known in the locality. The next thing was to go to the bank in Lombard Street and track him out by means of the bill which Mike had cashed. Off the two went, and after a time the transaction was traced. But the bill turned out, on examination, to be a forgery; and the bank in vain tried to stop payment of the notes. They had been exchanged for gold on the previous Saturday. The bank authorities were in a quandary, and Mike and his mother had to tell them all they knew about the matter, which they did in a very circumstantial way. One of the partners of the banking-house thought he saw how the thief could be caught, and he accordingly made the following extraordinary arrangement with the simple Irish boy. After asking if Mike would know the man if he saw him, he proposed that Mike should perambulate the streets of London all day in search of the man, for which he (the banker) would allow him one pound a week; adding, 'If you find the man, or his haunts, you are to come immediately to me, and let me know.' As Mike's salary was only to be seven shillings a week from his thief employer, the transition to one pound sterling was a welcome one.

It probably occurred to Mike's Milesian mind, as it would to that of almost any other nationality, that his interest lay in not catching his quondam master. Were the latter to be arrested, then 'Othello's occupation would be gone.' At any rate, Mike never found the man he was in search of, though he roamed the busy London thoroughfares in search of his prey with the comportment of a very amateur detective. As luck would have it, Mike was ordered by his banking employer to proceed to France, in company with one of the Bow Street officers, for the purpose of being present at the coronation of Charles X., in the hope that Dixon, whom he was in search of, might be discovered among the spectators at that ceremony. Mike went to France and attended the coronation, but returned, as might be expected, without finding Dixon.

The young detective resumed his rambles in the streets of London; but the banker for whom he was acting came to see that Mike's mission was becoming too unprofitable to be continued. So, one Saturday, as Mike walked into the bank office to draw his weekly salary, he was addressed by the banker in the following terms: 'Well, my boy, you have not found that scoundrel yet, and I begin to think you do not look after him, for I never see you.' To this Mike replied with great naïveté, 'The reason is, sir, that when you are in the east I am in the west.' The upshot of it all was that Mike got his *congé* after having been three months in the banker's service.

at one pound a week, during which time he enjoyed a trip to France at the banker's expense. Mike was told that ten pounds would be paid him if he found the man. The latter was, however, not got, and the bank lost one hundred

pounds through their vain attempt to catch the perpetrator of the forged acceptance. The story seems incomplete without telling the future fate of Mike. Let us hope he went back to his father's hod and lime for an occupation.

## A NATURALIST'S EXPERIENCES ON THE AMAZON.

By A. E. PRATT, F.R.G.S., Author of *The Snows of Tibet*, &c.



ANY years ago, when I was in the States, an unsophisticated old farmer, surprised at my enthusiasm in capturing insects, used to call me 'The Buggist.' The appropriateness of the title, in a land where every beetle is designated by a term only applied in England to *Cimex lectularius*, rather tickled me at the time. It may be guessed from this that I am a naturalist. In pursuit of insects: beetles, butterflies, moths, and other small deer—to say nothing of orchids—I have visited some rather out-of-the-way portions of the globe. I have been stoned and chased by the Chinese as a foreign devil bent upon obtaining the material for casting a horrible spell on the whole Mongolian race; I have chummed with some remarkably dirty Bedouins in Syria, and have had unpleasant experiences in the mountainous parts of Colombia. But one expedition, in which ill-luck dogged my steps all the time, stands out most prominently in my memory.

It was a trip I made up the river Amazon in the year 1892. My object was to make observations, and fix the latitude, &c., of certain places very seldom visited by Europeans; also to obtain specimens of the flora and fauna. Having been up the Mississippi and Missouri and the Yang-tze-kiang, I knew something about inland navigation; and I was, I confess, rather eager to see something of the vast river which drains the region of the Andes.

I need not detail my experiences in crossing the ocean; they were of the ordinary type. In due course I arrived at Pará. I had with me a number of scientific instruments; and on my arrival in Brazil I was terribly worried by officials; they would not be convinced that my object was strictly scientific. I did not know it at the time, but learned afterwards that my instruments caused a lively discussion, and that the newspapers of the country gravely asserted that I was going up to the borders of British Guiana to annex territory. After a great deal of trouble I managed to get a sort of passport from the president telling people to help me; but, alas! I did not know that edicts were also secretly sent along, forbidding people to assist me in any way. Not knowing this, however, I proceeded up the river.

I was even more impressed by the Amazon than I had been by the Mississippi. It was difficult to imagine that the wonderful waters over which we steamed day after day were those of a river, or that when we arrived at Manoa we were nearly a thousand miles from the sea. The steamers run up to Manoa to take the rubber, which is one of the chief products of the country; and, having arrived there, my wish was to get as far up the Rio Negro as possible.

Then it was I discovered one of the pleasant little customs of the country. The government, I need hardly explain, is a republic—tempered by revolutions.

Amongst those who came under the suspicions of the powers that be was a young gentleman of Rio Janeiro. He was driving as usual one morning to his office when he was stopped by the military. He was not even permitted to say 'Good-bye' to his wife, but was hurried on board a steamer, where he found himself with a number of other suspects. He expected something unpleasant when the steamer left Rio; and he was not disappointed, for he learnt that they were to be taken to the most desolate and deserted part of the fever-haunted Rio Negro. The captors were so far amenable to the public opinion of the civilised world that they did not like to shoot their political prisoners, so they sent them to a place where fever or *berri-berri* would be almost certain to finish them off. But it so happened that the gentleman I have mentioned, having Scotch blood in his veins, had acquired considerable wealth—some said he was a millionaire. Being rich, he naturally had friends who managed to smuggle occasional supplies to him. A steam-launch was leaving about the time I was at Manoa to take these supplies to the place where he and his friends had been transported, which was about four hundred miles up the Rio Negro.

After accidents and drawbacks innumerable, which I then thought a most extraordinary streak of ill-luck, but which I now believe were intentionally arranged, I fell in with the steam-launch which was smuggling sheep and decent provisions to these political exiles; and when those on board found out that, like the Irish emigrant of another part of the continent, I was 'agin' the government, they very readily agreed to take me to the place they were going to,



which they called by the high-sounding name, San Isabel. Like Martin Chuzzlewit, I expected San Isabel to be a town where I should find a few of the amenities of civilisation.

Never shall I forget the magnificent affluent of the Amazon up which we steamed. On leaving Manoa, after steaming for nine hours, I could easily imagine myself on the ocean again. The river widens out to such an extent that we could see no land around us. After steaming for a time up the Rio Negro the banks became visible again, and I could see that on each side was forest with trees of immense height. I was told that at a certain season of the year the river rose ninety feet, and overflowed into these forests for, in some cases, hundreds of miles. There is a six months' rise and a six months' fall of the river; and at the time I was there the river was at three-quarters flood.

When, in due course, we reached San Isabel my heart fell in a manner which again suggested Martin's impressions of Eden, and I wished for a Mark Tapley to cheer me up. Unfortunately my English companion and assistant was not a Mark Tapley. San Isabel simply consisted of three huts or shelters, made in the rudest fashion, in a swamp surrounded by virgin forest. It was merely a place for the Indians to bring the rubber they collected, and where it was called for at irregular and infrequent intervals. In this fever-haunted region the poor wretches of exiles had been left. How glad they were to see us! Their means were scanty, but their hospitality was lavish. From the young fellow I have mentioned (who spoke English fluently) I heard the story of his abduction, and he introduced me to his companions in misery, one of whom had been a colonel in the Brazilian army. He wrote to me subsequently from Paris, and he then told me that, though they eventually managed to escape, three or four of their number died of fever. It did not take me long to come to the conclusion that San Isabel was a place to get away from. I could not proceed up the river. There were no suitable craft, and no stores to be had for love or money. I could have gone back in the steamer, but I wished to examine the virgin forest on the banks and do some collecting. With immense difficulty I eventually managed to secure a dug-out canoe and a couple of Indians to paddle it; and, bidding a friendly farewell to the political exiles, I commenced a journey down the river, camping on its banks at night.

The Rio Negro takes its name from the colour of its water, which is a rich coffee-tint, and discolours the Amazon, where it joins it, for miles. This water has the peculiarity of quickly clearing a vessel's hull of the algæ. I wondered why this should be so; but when I examined the sand on the banks of the river (which is black when wet, and gray when dry) it looked to me

very like iron pyrites. While we were on the Amazon we were terribly tormented by mosquitoes, and I was struck by the fact that on entering the Rio Negro these pests suddenly disappeared, and we saw no more of them. Our rejoicings, however, were soon cut short, for the mosquitoes were replaced by the equally objectionable sand-flies, which are called *pions* in the country. These savage little 'pests, when we camped out, tormented us fearfully. The irritation caused by their bites did not subside for a fortnight in my case, and they nearly drove me distracted.

It is delicate work to balance a dug-out canoe; and as my specimens increased in number we sank deeper and deeper into the water, till eventually we had hardly three inches freeboard. The discomfort of travelling four hundred miles in such a craft can be imagined. I had to lie very still in the bottom of the canoe, hardly daring to move. The Indians I found to be capital fellows; they paddled up creeks and through openings in the forest which saved us many miles. On the banks, few and far between, we saw places where the Portuguese had tried to establish settlements. These were all overgrown; fever had killed many of the settlers, and driven the rest away. We sometimes paddled for days without meeting a soul. Now and then we saw a cayman float lazily with the stream, or toss a fish which he had caught. We camped out on the banks at night, and it was a great treat to stretch one's self after the cramping canoe.

Our food was mostly *cassava* (or manioc) and fish which the Indians caught. These fish are large and have enormous scales; but their flesh is flabby and tastes insipid. Once when I was trailing my hand in the water the Indians warned me not to do so, as I might have my finger snapped off; and, as I looked at the teeth of some of the larger fish we caught, I could well believe it. When going through some of the quiet, shallow lagoons I heard a strange booming sound, which I was afterwards told was caused by electric-eels. I noticed that the Indians were strangely averse to entering the water, and thought perhaps they were afraid of the eels; but was told that there was also a very much dreaded creature which would effect an entrance into the bodies of men or animals, causing excruciating pain. The Indians, however, were experts at varying our dietary; and on one occasion, when we were all very hot and tired, they felled a species of palm, and cut out the young leaves at the centre; it tasted like a delicious lettuce, with a peculiarly sweet and delicate flavour all its own. On another occasion I also tasted the *sapucaya* nut, and thought its flavour far superior to the Brazil nut, with which we in England are better acquainted. It grows in enormous pods, about the size of a man's head. When it reaches maturity the cap of the pod falls off, scattering the nuts inside in all directions, which quickly become the food of

the monkeys. The pod containing the Brazil nut falls intact, and the monkeys cannot crack it; hence it is so much more commonly seen in England than the sapucaya nut. The forest was very silent. We heard an occasional scream from a monkey or a bird. There were beasts of prey evidently; because once, when we had paddled ashore, and were tying our canoe to the banks, I saw a jaguar in the tree above me; but he was off before I could get my gun. On another occasion a huge anaconda slipped past us and entered the water. During these intermissions of paddling I made excursions into the forest, and secured many specimens, some hitherto undescribed.

As we proceeded the river increased in size. Its width may be judged by the fact that on one occasion, when I wished to cross to the other side, it took my Indians four hours to do so. We were nine days paddling down. Towards the end we were delayed by tropical storms. The thunder and lightning were really terrifying in their vehemence, and the wind raised such a swell that we could not venture to encounter it in our frail craft. Fortunately the country began to be more populated; and once, when we had lost our way and a storm came on, we were very glad to obtain refuge in a hut where we found several Indians. One of these was very ill, almost *in extremis*. I did what I could for him, but was struck by the utter indifference of a younger Indian, who was said to be the old man's son, and who would do nothing to second my efforts. He, however, set our Indians on the right course, and we arrived at Manoa's thoroughly worn out.

To show the wonderful endurance of the Indians I may say that they paddled at the last for thirty hours in succession without intermission, and without speaking.

After we had recruited, I thought I would try to get up the Rio Branco, an affluent of the Rio Negro, as I heard that a launch was to proceed to a place called Caracacai (which I cannot find marked on any map) for cattle, and would tow up several barges. I thought it might also tow a boat with my belongings and an Indian canoe. It was with great difficulty I obtained a reluctant permission to join the small string of boats which the steam-launch was towing; but no one would render me any assistance, not even Indians. I think labour must have been rather scarce, for the stoker of the rotten little launch was a half-caste woman, and the crews of the launch and the other boats were mostly Indians and half-breeds. We left on August 12th, and passed an old settlement, Santa Maria, but there were no inhabitants; all had died of fever. We had hardly entered the Rio Branco when we encountered a terrific storm in the wide part of the river, where again we could see no land. There was soon a sea as choppy as I have seen in the Channel. The launch lost some of her bulwarks,

and I could see that the captain and his men were terribly frightened.

Before we got to Caracacai several of our men became ill with fever, and one poor fellow died. We delayed our journey just long enough to bury him on the shore, but again had to stop to perform the same mournful office for another. By the time we reached Caracacai, on 21st August, nearly every member of the expedition was more or less ill. I will not weary the reader with details of the minor accidents—how the launch's cranky machinery kept going wrong, and the pilot, who had only been up once before, lost his way. I had to do all my own work, and as I began to feel very ill myself, became less and less able to do it. However, they found our destination eventually, and about fifty head of cattle were put on the lighters we towed. These appeared to have been driven from a healthier district, for in the distance we saw mountain ranges which do not appear on any map I have yet seen, and which I was told had never been visited by Europeans. On our return journey I had great demands made upon the surgical appliances I had taken with me. We had repeatedly to go ashore and cut wood for the launch; and on one of these occasions a branch fell on our pilot, smashing his face and cutting the poor fellow's nose off. He was knocked perfectly senseless, and but for the remedies and appliances I had brought would have bled to death. When he was down our voyage became still more exasperating, for we kept losing our way and getting aground.

The irritation caused by this, the illness, and want of proper food—for, the voyage having lasted longer than was anticipated, our stores began to give out—caused the crew to become sullen and mutinous. It was largely the captain's fault. He was a perfect brute, and hailed from Gibraltar. I called him the 'Rock Scorpion.' He had repeated fracas with the crew, one of whom eventually drew his knife, Portuguese fashion. They carved each other quite scientifically. Again demands were made upon my surgical-box, and I admit I begrudged my bandages in this case. Then the cattle on the lighters, which were rendered furious through lack of food and attention, gored an attendant who went to them, and nearly killed him; in fact he would have died but for my bandaging, &c.

All this time I was getting weaker and weaker, and the entries in my diary became few and far between. I can recall little of the last part of the journey; but we arrived at Manoa's on 2d September. I then found I was suffering from *berri-berri*, a disease in which the ankles first swell. As the disease creeps upwards it benumbs each part it attacks. There was no cure but change of climate, so I took the earliest opportunity of getting out of the horrible country; and it took me some time to recover my usual health

when I eventually reached home. I shall never forget the irritation and suffering of that, to me, utterly useless voyage up the Rio Branco.

What struck me most was the vastness of the great river and its tributaries, and its resemblance to the sea; even porpoises are found in its waters, and a manatee peculiar to the river. Next was the scarcity of the population. I do not think we met half-a-dozen people—and they were Indians—all the way coming down from San

Isabel, four hundred miles. The remains of settlements tell the cause, and testify to the unhealthiness of the region. Then, too, the awfulness of the tropical storms is vividly impressed on my memory; the terrific thunder and lightning, the groaning of the huge trees, and the crash when some monarch of the forest falls. On the whole, however, after my experience I am not surprised that travellers give the upper reaches of the Amazon and its tributaries a wide berth.

## SWIFT'S LONDON LIFE.



It is hardly possible to exaggerate the debt which all who take an interest in social history owe to those keepers of diaries and writers of journals in days gone by, who by their notings of the trivial, everyday incidents of their lives have thus preserved for us the very atmosphere of the past, and have given lifelikeness and reality to all our imaginings of the sayings and doings of our forefathers.

Among the various records of this kind few are more interesting than the series of intimate and playful letters which the saturnine Dean of St Patrick's wrote to 'Stella' and her companion, Mrs Dingley, in Ireland, during his prolonged residence in London—before obtaining his deanery—in the days of Queen Anne. These letters are doubtless valuable material for political as well as for social history; but most readers nowadays are little interested in the details of Swift's intrigues, first with one political party and then with the other. These pullings of party wires, and fears and hopes regarding matters of foreign and domestic policy, are all dead and devoid of interest. But the thousand and one details of Swift's daily life, and the light which his sayings and doings throw on the everyday course of existence in London nearly two hundred years ago, are full of living interest.

We learn what lodgings cost in those days. Swift lodges for a while in Bury Street, and for a sitting-room and bedchamber on the first floor pays eight shillings a week. This he calls 'plaguy deep.' More than a year later, when he moves to Chelsea, he has to pay six shillings a week for what he describes as 'one silly room with confounded coarse sheets.' Swift had a keen eye for thrift. He turns his friends' tables to good account; for, after living nearly a month in London in the dead season, he is able to write that 'it has cost me but three shillings in meat and drink since I came here, as thin as the town is.' A few days later he invites himself to dine with a friend, but unfortunately finds him from home. Whereupon he complains that he was forced to go to a chop-house and dine for tenpence on 'gill ale, bad broth, and three chops of mutton.' The cost

of the then indispensable wig alarms him. He pays three guineas one day for a periwig, and exclaims 'I am undone!' He is amusingly parsimonious with his coals. Before going to bed he picks the unburned pieces off his fire; and one evening, when he comes home late and finds a large fire wasting its warmth on the desert room, he roundly abuses his manservant, Patrick, for his carelessness. Occasionally the economist gets 'let in,' as the modern colloquial phrase has it. He goes with a friend, Sir Andrew Fountaine, one evening to a tavern, where for two bottles of wine they have sixteen shillings to pay. 'But if ever he catches me so again,' says Swift emphatically, 'I will spend as many pounds.'

As we read we see much of the social life and intercourse of the town focussed in the taverns and coffee-houses. Swift goes into the City with a companion. They dine at a chop-house with a learned woollen-draper, then saunter in china and book shops, stroll into a tavern where they drink two pints of white wine, and do not separate till ten in the evening. In the earlier part of his stay in London, Swift spends many evenings with Addison and Steele, and others of their well-known circle, at the coffee and wine laden tables of Button's Coffee-house. His letters are addressed to the St James's Coffee-house, and are placed in the frame of the large glass behind the bar, where Harley, the Minister, spies them, and, struck by the resemblance of Stella's handwriting to Swift's own, asks his reverence how long he has had the trick of writing letters to himself. One evening Swift christens the child of Elliot, the St James's coffee-man, and after the ceremony attends a supper given by the father, when Steele and he sit with 'some scurvy company' over a bowl of punch until a late hour. Other times, other manners.

Twelfth Day was well observed in those times. Swift, going into the City on that day in 1711, says he was stopped by clusters of boys and girls 'buzzing about the cake-shops like flies.' The cakes were frothed with sugar and adorned with tinsel streamers. One day Swift good-naturedly conducts a party of country visitors to see the sights. They visit the lions in the Tower, go

to Bedlam (which then figured in the list of London entertainments), dine at a chop-house behind the Exchange, look in at Gresham College, and wind up the evening at the Puppet-show, a kind of glorified Punch and Judy. On another evening he goes with one or two members of the same party to Vauxhall, to hear the nightingales!

The ladies in Ireland entrust their correspondent with a variety of commissions, as ladies are still wont to do. Chocolate and handkerchiefs, palsy-water and spectacles, a petticoat and a microscope, tobacco (for Mrs Dingley, alas!) and books, aprons, pocket-books, and pounds of tea—all are duly bought at shops in Pall Mall, Paternoster Row, Ludgate Hill, and elsewhere, and are carefully packed and despatched to Ireland. When Swift buys books for himself he is by no means stingy. One day he goes into a shop kept by a bookseller named Bateman, and lays out forty-eight shillings. On another visit to the same shop he spends twenty-five shillings on a Strabo and an Aristophanes, and resolves to buy more. Raffling for books seems to have been then a common kind of amusement. Swift embarks in one speculation of this kind, but grumbles that though he laid out four pounds seven shillings, he only got half-a-dozen volumes.

The letters give us vivid little pictures of street life. Going home one evening along the Strand, Swift breaks his shin over a tub of sand left out in the pathway. He goes straight to bed, and applies goldbeater's skin, abusing his servant for being nearly an hour in bringing a rag from next door. A snowy day comes, and poor Swift has to spend two shillings in chair and coach hire, besides walking till he is dirty. Walking is dangerous because of the slippery state of the streets, and Swift notes that a baker's boy had broken his thigh by a fall the day before. He says that he himself takes care to walk slowly, takes short steps, and never treads on his heel. In support of this he quotes a Devonshire saying:

Walk fast in snow,  
In frost walk slow;  
And still as you go,  
Tread on your toe.

When frost and snow are both together,  
Sit by the fire and spare shoe-leather.

Here is a curious little picture. Walking to town from Chelsea one morning, Swift sees two old lame men standing at the door of a brandy-shop for a long time, 'complimenting who should go in first.' This was not much to tell, he says, but an admirable jest to see.

Swift is always grumbling at the price of wine. The basest, he remarks once, costs six shillings a bottle; but, on the other hand, fruit is cheap, for the finest oranges are twopence apiece, which does not strike the modern purchaser of oranges as remarkably cheap. At Pontack's, a famous

restaurant in the City, the proprietor assures his customers that although his wine is so good he asks only seven shillings a flask for it. 'Are not these pretty rates?' exclaims Swift. He confesses that when he hears of choice books for sale he itches to spend money on them; but the cost of wine is a continual trouble. Swift grumbles, too, at the cost of tipping great men's servants, especially at Christmas-time, when he makes a round of calls, dropping half-crowns with a lavishness which must have troubled him greatly.

The *Journal to Stella* is indeed, in modern literary slang, a very human document. It shows us aspects of the author of *Gulliver* and of the *Tale of a Tub*, and of many another biting satire, which but for these letters could hardly have been known to us. It records many a kindly deed as well as many a sharp saying; much playful humour as well as not a few grossnesses. Its chief recommendation and most valuable voucher is that, unlike some self-revelations of later date, it was obviously written without a thought of publication, and is therefore absolutely free from posing of any kind.

#### BALLADE OF A QUIET ROMANTICIST.

DAYLONG, for a scanty wage,  
Caged, I drive a weary quill;  
But at eve my head's a stage  
Where a thousand actors drill.  
Swords are glancing, fifers shrill,  
Silks and jewels gleam and shine,  
Flutter flounce and ruff and frill—  
And the hero's part is mine.

All for me the fair and sage  
Juliet's at her window-sill;  
Bold Sir Brian lifts my gage,  
Whose false blood my sword shall spill;  
O'er my body stiff and still  
Enid tears her hair divine;  
Bells are tolled and cities thrill—  
And the hero's part is mine.

Gentle, simple, knight or page,  
Every ruffler's skin I fill;  
Yea, and charm this modern age  
With sublime detective skill;  
Wheresoe'er knaves plot ill  
Virtue sinks, fair maids repine,  
There am I to help or kill—  
And the hero's part is mine.

#### ENVOI.

Prince, I envy not your chill  
State and ceremonial fine,  
While Romance has all her will,  
And the hero's part is mine.

WALTER HOGG.